

REPORT

DATE: January 21, 2004

TO: Administration Committee and Regional Council

FROM: Mark Griffin, Senior Regional Planner
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SUBJECT: Membership request for the United States/Mexico Border Counties Coalition

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S APPROVAL:



RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Authorize Fiscal Year 2003/04 expenditure of \$1,000 for annual Bronze Level Associate membership dues to the United States/Mexico Border Counties Coalition, as recommended by the Southwest Compact Task Force at their December 3, 2003 meeting.

SUMMARY:

SCAG has established the Southwest Compact Task Force, which is a continuation of the accomplishments of the former NAFTA Sub-committee, to advance economic development and enhance regional coordination between governmental planning agencies throughout the border areas of the Western United States and northern Mexico. Furthermore, the SCAG Legislative program adopted in December 2003 includes two items that support the Southwest Compact. First, advocate for and support in concept S. 458 (Bingaman) and H.R. 1071 (Reyes), which would establish a Southwest Regional Border Authority Act to create a regional economic development authority that fosters infrastructure, technology, workforce and community development. The Regional Council took action to support this legislation in concept at its July 31, 2003 meeting. Second, support the development of legislation that corresponds with SCAG's ongoing efforts to develop the Southwest Passage, a multi-state goods movement trade corridor along the I-10, and the Southwest Compact, a coalition of states sharing goods movement and economic development interests.

As one avenue to further advance the goals and initiatives of the Southwest Compact, staff recommends Associate level membership in the United States/Mexico Border Counties Coalition. The goals of the Coalition are to:

- Advocate legislation and other policies to provide to Border Counties the fiscal resources to meet the costs associated with being located on the United States/Mexico border.
- Initiate advocacy efforts with the U.S. Congress to include the establishment of a United States/Mexico Border Congressional Caucus.
- Promote improvements in the economy, infrastructure and the other conditions along the United States/Mexico border.

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- Develop constructive dialogue between U.S. County officials and their Mexican counterparts across the border.

The Coalition also sponsors two conferences each year. The first was held in Las Cruces, New Mexico in October 2003 and was attended by Mark Griffin of SCAG. The second will be held in Washington, D.C. in March 2004.

Membership in the Coalition will be beneficial to SCAG in three respects. First, it will confirm SCAG's commitment to advancing the Southwest Compact and working with other organizations in the border region. Second, a good representation of border counties participating in the Coalition will allow for networking opportunities in support of the activities of the Southwest Compact Task Force. Finally, membership will enhance working relationships with US Senator Bingaman's staff and with representatives from Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico. It is also important to note that two regional planning agencies are currently members of the Coalition: the Southeastern Arizona Governments Organization (SEAGO), and the Rio Grande Council of Governments. A majority of the twenty-four border counties along the border are also members of the Coalition.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Approving this request will result in the expenditure of \$1,000 for membership dues from the SCAG General Fund.

